

ECLIPSE
COMICS

MS. TREE'S

ONE DOLLAR
1
\$1.25 in Canada

Thrilling DETECTIVE ADVENTURES

FIRST
ISSUE!

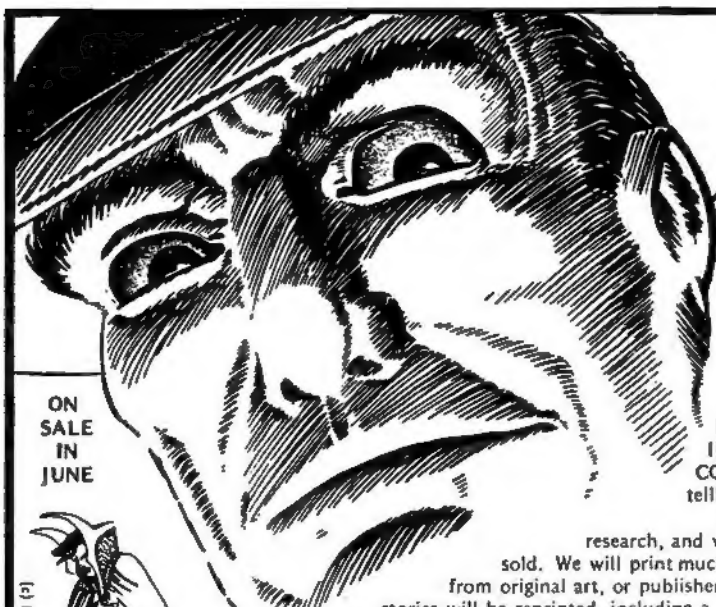


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and
Tommy
Bentley

INSIDE!



FAMOUS DETECTIVE
PIN-UP #1 BY
FRANK MILLER!



THE ART OF STEVE DITKO

This is one of the most overdue and awaited art books in recent years! Steve Ditko — the creator of Spider-Man, Doctor Strange, Captain Atom, Mr. A, The Creeper, Shade the Changing Man, The Question, and many other characters! Here is a survey of his entire career, in a **HEAVILY ILLUSTRATED** 136 page book, with 8 pages in **COLOR**, and examples of Ditko's art and story-telling techniques.

Steve Ditko is co-operating in the book's research, and will receive royalties on every copy sold. We will print much obscure Ditko art taken either from original art, or publishers' archives. Three complete stories will be reprinted, including a hard-to-find 1950s Charlton classic! Also included will be a complete Ditko Checklist for collectors!

THE ART OF STEVE DITKO will be available in an 8½ x 11 trade paperback . . . plus a limited edition hardcover. Each hardcover copy will contain a tipped-in color plate drawn especially for this book by Steve Ditko! This color plate will be **SIGNED** and **NUMBERED** by DITKO and will only be available in the hardcover. Trade paper: \$10.95. Hardcover: \$18.95. Please add \$1.25 postage per book. Order now to reserve your signed edition copy!

ON
SALE
IN
JUNE

(c) Marvel Comics

(c) Marvel Comics



WOMEN and the COMICS

by Trina Robbins and Catherine Yronwode

Here is the **DEFINITIVE** book about women and the comics, written and edited by the two leading authorities in the field. Trina Robbins and Catherine Yronwode have spent three years doing research — interviewing female comics creators, uncovering rare newspaper and comic book art, and compiling a **HEAVILY ILLUSTRATED** 136 page book that finally gives due credit to the many women who've worked in comics for the last 80 years! From the early days of newspaper strips, to the exciting "jungle girl" artists of the 1940s, on through Wendy Pini, Marie Severin and Jan Duursema, this book also presents for the first time anywhere, a checklist of all women known to have created comics!!

Rose O'Neill • Dale Messick
Tarpe Mills • Fanny Y.
Cory • Marty Links
Nell Brinkley • Ann
Brewster • Fran Hopper
Grace Drayton • Ethel
Hays • Sharon Rudahl
Cathy Guisewite • Ruth
Roche • Gladys Parker •

Lynn Johnston • Ramona Fradon • Edwina Dumm
Leo Marrs • Nina Albright • Lela Dowling • Selby Kelly
Shary Flenniken • Nicole Hollander • Lillian Chestney
and many more!

8½ x 11 high quality Trade paperback: \$10.95
Limited edition signed/numbered hardcover: \$18.95
Please add \$1.25 per book for postage and handling.



(c) Wendy Pini



Ethel Hays



(c) Rose O'Neill



(c) Tarpe Mills

136 pages
8 page Color section



**HEAVILY
ILLUSTRATED**

ON
SALE
IN
APRIL

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SQUID EDITION



\$0.00 US \$0.00 CAN

M

"DEATH DO US PART"

TREE

by Max
Collins

and Terry
Beatty

Chapter
One

THE WOMAN *in* **THE**
BLACK
BIKINI

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Collins
and
Beatty



I WAS ALONE ON
THE BEACH. WHITE
SAND. GREEN PINES.

THE SUN IS OUT - SHINING
BRIGHTLY - SHIMMERING
ON THE WATER -



WHY, THEN, AM I SO COLD?



A COUPLE STROLLS ONTO
THE BEACH - YOUNG, IN
LOVE - THE BOY RESEMBLES
MY OLD HIGH SCHOOL FLAME,
BILLY - THE GIRL'S FACE I
CAN'T MAKE OUT -



SUDDENLY A CHILD JOINS THEM - HE'S THEIR
SON, IT WOULD SEEM - FUNNY, THEY SEEM
TOO YOUNG TO HAVE A CHILD -



THE COUPLE DOESN'T SEE THE FORM RISING
FROM THE WATER -



I SEE HIM RETREAT TO THE SAFETY OF THE
SEA -



AND I TAKE PURSUIT...



I SCRATCH HIS FACE -

AND THE SKIN COMES OFF -
THE FLESH FALLS AWAY -

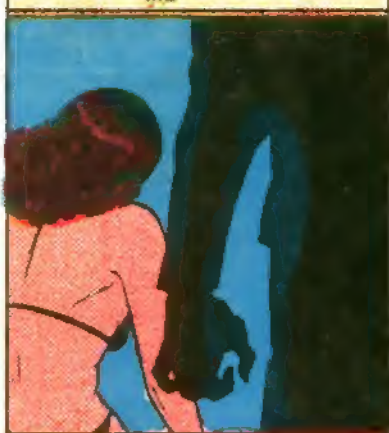
THEN HE'S GONE -



ON THE BEACH, THE BOY IS
FRIGHTENED, CONFUSED -
I WANT TO CONSOLE HIM -

THEN I NOTICE THE FACE OF
THE DEAD WOMAN -

I BEND TO HER, BUT A FIGURE
IS APPROACHING BEHIND
ME -



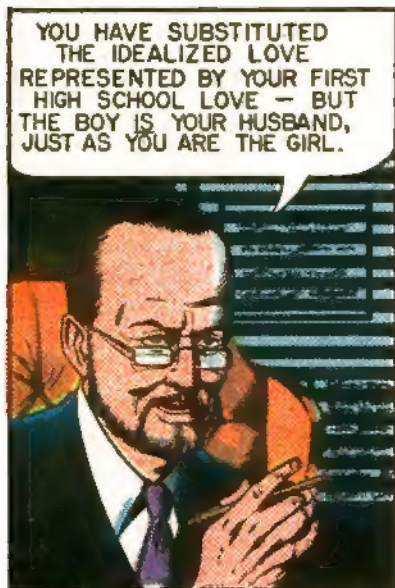
HE RUNS FROM ME.

MY FACE!

BUT BEFORE I CAN TURN
AND LOOK -



"BUT THE BASIC INTERPRETATION REMAINS THE SAME - THE COUPLE REPRESENTS YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND, MIKE TREE -"



"YOU ARE RE-LIVING THE TRAUMA OF HIS DEATH, THAT COLD RAINY NIGHT - IN THE DREAM THE SUN SHINES, BUT YOU ARE COLD, AND WATER IS NEARBY..."



"THIS IS MADE OBVIOUS BY THE CONFRONTATION WITH THE FROGMAN - WHO, AS IN LIFE, WAS THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HUSBAND'S MURDER: HIS FORMER PARTNER FROM HIS POLICE DAYS, CHICK STEELE."



"THE CHILD IS THE CHILD YOU WERE DENIED - THE CHILD YOU NEVER HAD WITH MIKE - THE CHILD HE DID HAVE WITH HIS FIRST WIFE."

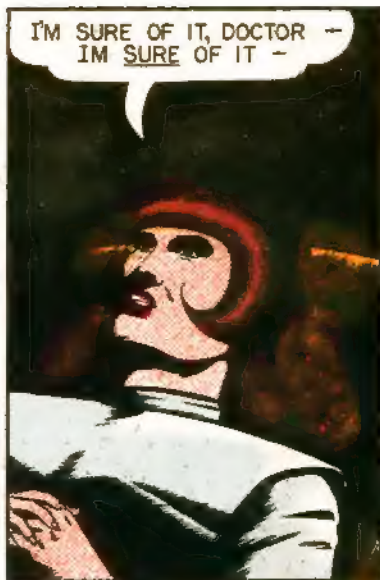




BUT WHAT OF THE NEW ELEMENT, DR. KASSEL? THE MAN WHO APPROACHES AS I WAKE - ?



THIS IS YOUR FIRST SESSION SINCE THE HOLIDAY I SUGGESTED YOU TAKE, MS. TREE... PERHAPS THE ANSWER LIES IN THESE PAST WEEKS -



I'M SURE OF IT, DOCTOR - IM SURE OF IT -

THE AFTERMATH OF MIKE'S MURDER - THE MURDER ITSELF, THEN THE SOLVING OF IT - WAS AN ANTICLIMAX... I TRIED TO GO BACK TO WORK -



MS. TREE - ARE YOU ALL RIGHT ?

SURE, EFFIE -

BUT I WASN'T ALL RIGHT - I HAD INSOMNIA - TERRIBLE INSOMNIA - AND WHEN I COULD SLEEP, I HAD THE DREAM -



THE AGENCY BORED ME - EVERYTHING SEEMED ROUTINE, UNIMPORTANT; MY INTEREST WAS NEXT TO NIL...



GLAD TO HAVE YOU BACK, ROGER - GET DAN AND COME INTO MY OFFICE.

I DID, HOWEVER, HAVE OTHER PLANS.



I'M ASSIGNING ALL MY CASES TO YOU. IF YOU FEEL YOU NEED EXTRA HELP, WE'LL TAKE ON MORE OPERATIVES. OTHERWISE, HANDLE THE WORKLOAD YOURSELVES.

LOOK, MS. TREE — MIKE'S MURDER IS OLD NEWS; YOU SOLVED IT. SHOWED THE WORLD YOU'RE A REAL DETECTIVE — NOW, LET'S GET BACK TO NORMAL —



COME ON, KID —
LET'S GET TO
WORK.



DA DROPS MUERTA CASE

INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE

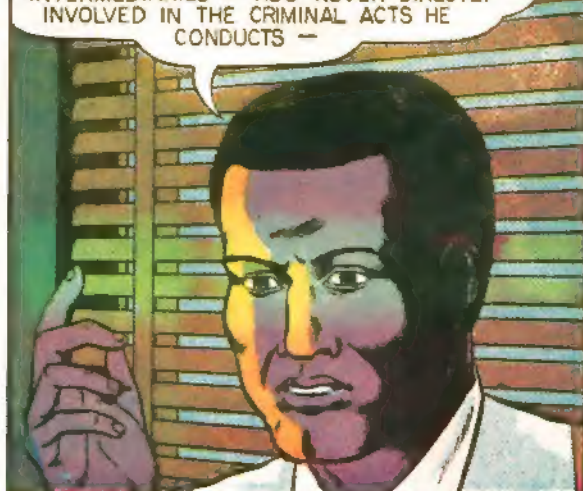
NOS PROBE ENDS

THERE WAS A MAN ON THE FORCE MIKE HAD TRUSTED — SGT. RAFA VALER; THEY'D MOVED HIM UP INTO CHICK'S OLD OFFICE —



MUERTA CAN'T BE TOUCHED, MICHAEL.

HE'S TOO WELL INSULATED — HE NEVER GIVES AN ORDER WITHOUT GOING THROUGH THREE INTERMEDIARIES — HE'S NEVER DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE CRIMINAL ACTS HE CONDUCTS —



PRIMARILY DRUG TRAFFICKING — HIS TRUCKING FIRM COULD COME IN HANDY, THERE. I WANT HIM, RAFA. HE'S THE MAN CHICK WAS COVERING UP FOR —



GO BACK TO WORK, MICHAEL — FORGET THIS!

NO! NO! SOMEONE HAS TO DO SOMETHING! I HAVE TO DO SOMETHING...



LET THE POLICE DO THEIR JOB —

LIKE CHICK?



LADY, WE'RE NOT ALL IN BED WITH THE MOB — I'M NO CHICK STEELE!

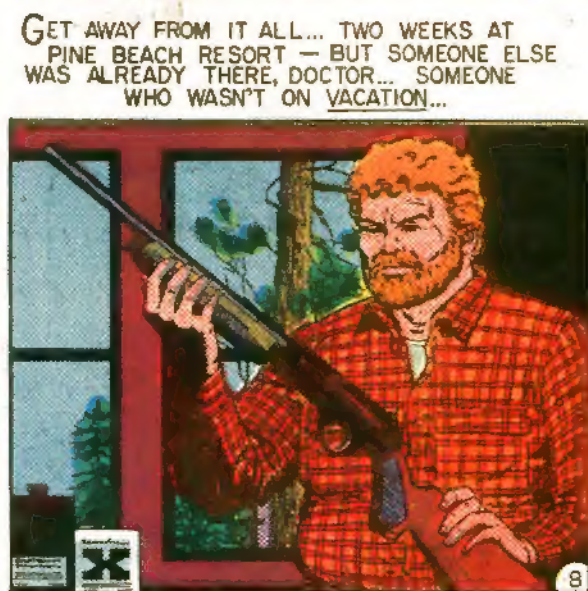
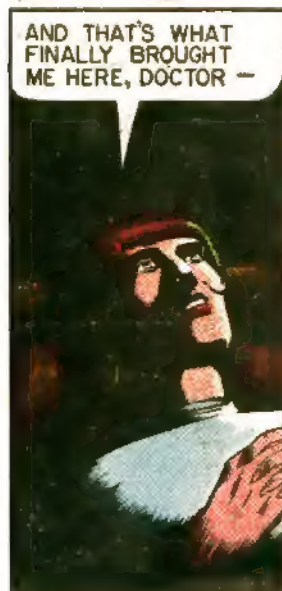
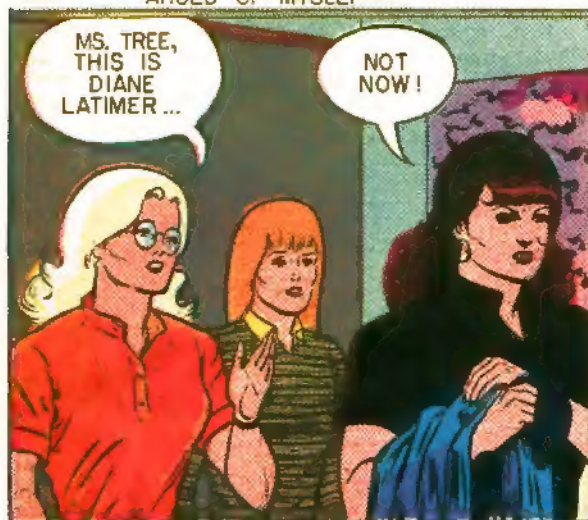
I KNOW, I'M SORRY, RAFA.



I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S WRONG WITH ME...



I WENT BACK TO THE OFFICE HOPING TO GET
A HOLD OF MYSELF —



M

"DEATH DO US PART"

TREE

by Max Collins and Terry Beatty

Chapter Two

PINE BEACH RESORT...
JUST WHAT THE DOCTOR
ORDERED..

SECOND HONEYMOON

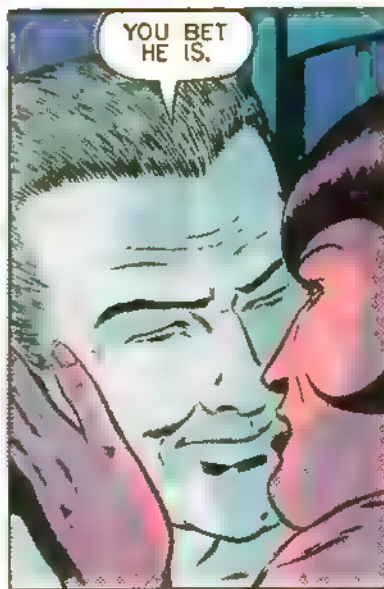
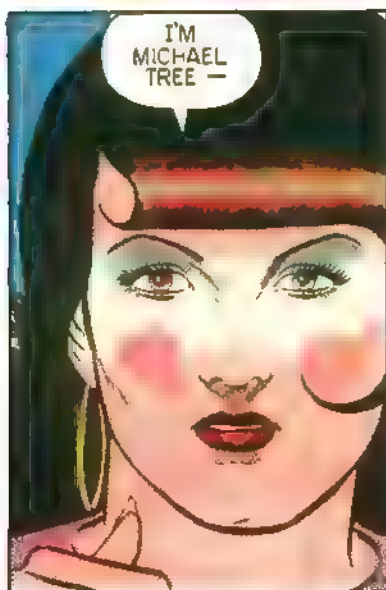
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and
Beatty

IT'S BEAUTIFUL —
HASN'T CHANGED
SINCE I WAS A
KID!

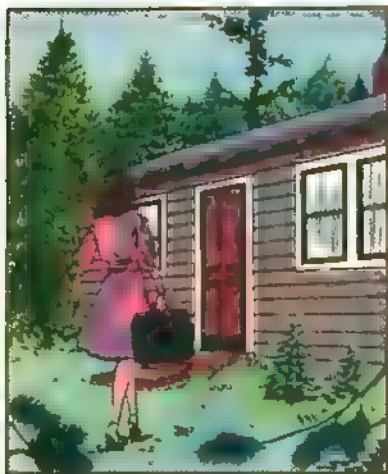
THAT'S RIGHT! YOUR
FOLKS USED TO COME
HERE ALL THE TIME..

A COUPLE OF KIDS ON THEIR HONEYMOON..
I HAD A RUSH OF SOME EMOTION I
CAN'T NAME... A BITTERSWEET SENSATION.

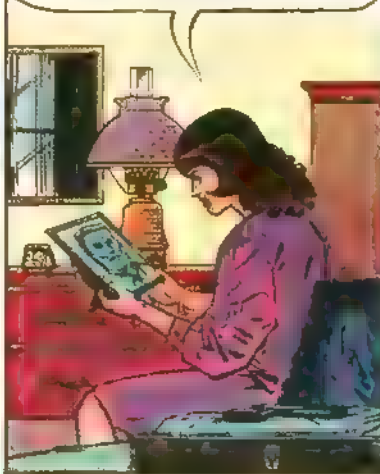
THEY EVEN
HONEYMOONED
HERE...



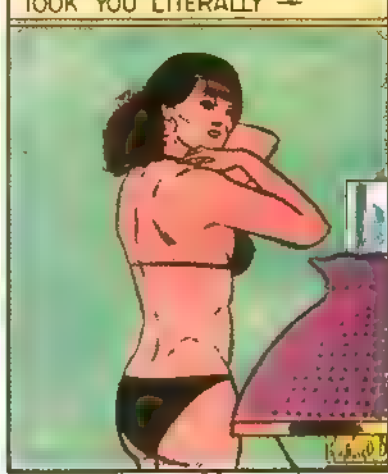
"IT'S A VERY NICE CABIN,
NEAR THE BEACH — ONE OF
OUR HONEYMOON CABINS,
ACTUALLY..."



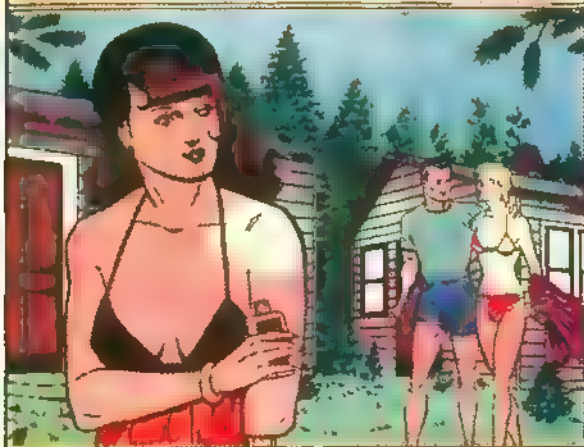
I WOULD'VE LOVED TO COME
HERE WITH YOU, MIKE — BUT
I THINK COMING HERE ALONE
WAS A MISTAKE...



BUT I WAS STILL THINKING
ABOUT YOUR ADVICE,
DOCTOR. "GET IN THE SWIM
OF IT," YOU SAID — SO I
TOOK YOU LITERALLY —



THE CABIN NEXT DOOR WAS FAR ENOUGH
FROM MINE TO INSURE PRIVACY — BUT
NOT SO FAR THAT I COULDN'T GET THE IDEA —



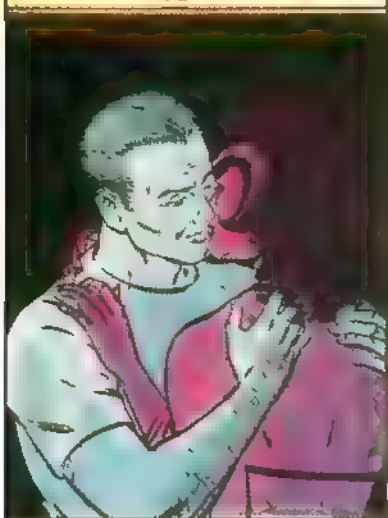
IT WAS A HONEYMOON CABIN, ALL RIGHT.

AND NOW THE BITTER PART OF THAT
BITTERSWEET SENSATION HAD FLOWN —

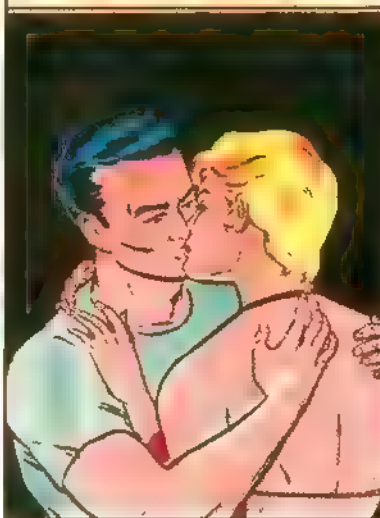


IT WAS SWEET — ONLY SWEET — TO SEE THEM
LOVE EACH OTHER LIKE THAT.

I WISHED IT WAS MIKE AND
ME —



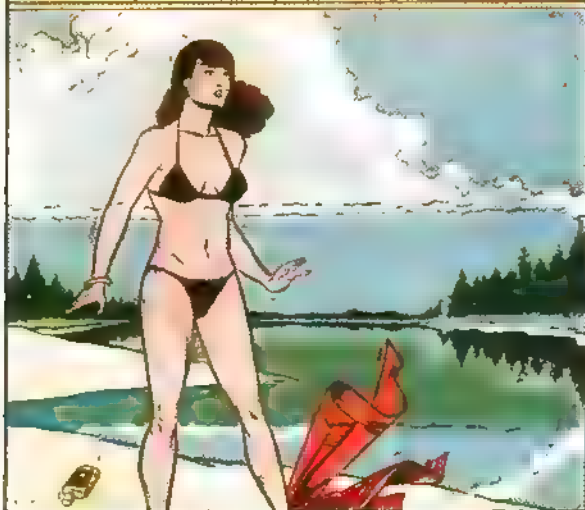
BUT I COULD ACCEPT THAT
IT WASN'T.



AND THEN I STEPPED ONTO
THE BEACH —



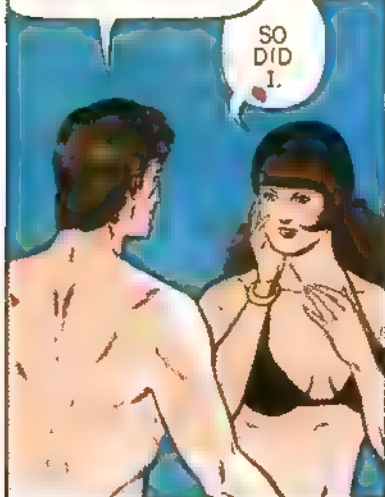
IT WAS THE BEACH IN MY DREAM! WHITE SAND, GREEN PINES —



I FELT DIZZY —



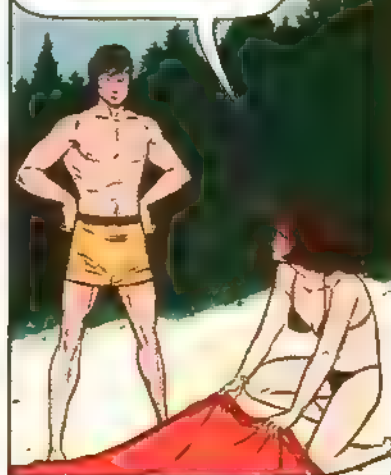
I THOUGHT YOU WERE GOING TO FAINT OR SOMETHING, FOR A WHILE THERE —



CAN I GET YOU SOMETHING? I CAN RUN BACK TO THE LODGE FOR A DRINK FOR YOU — OR WHATEVER ..



NO — YOU'RE VERY KIND, THOUGH, WHY DON'T YOU JOIN ME? I I COULD USE SOME COMPANY.



THAT'S THE BEST OFFER I'VE HAD IN TWO WEEKS.

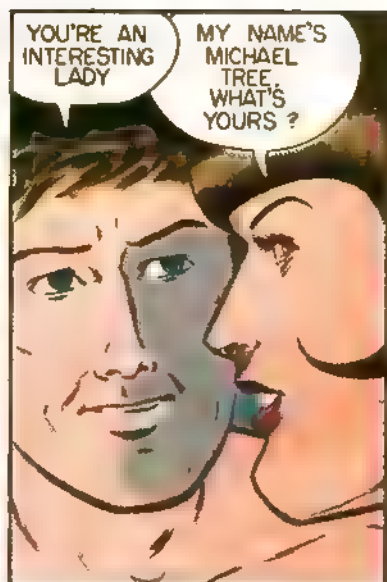
YOU'VE BEEN HERE THAT LONG?

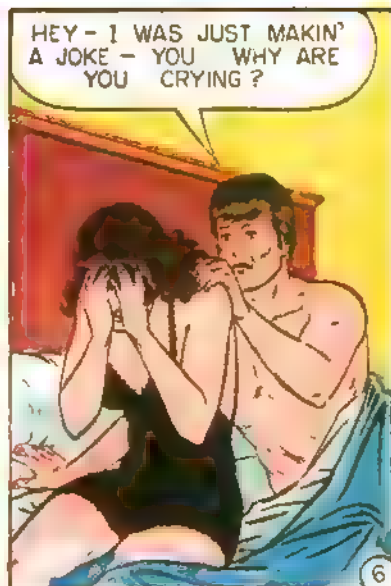
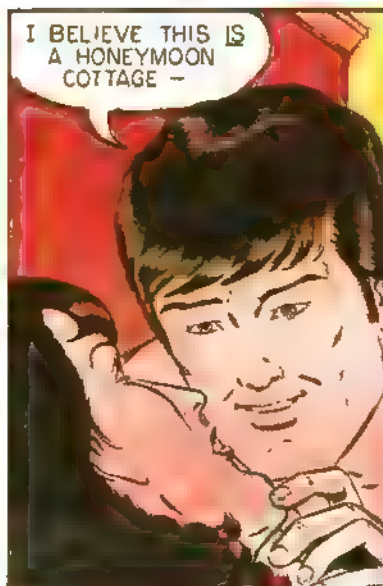
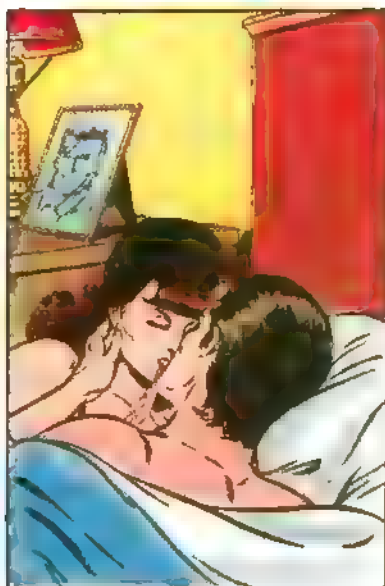
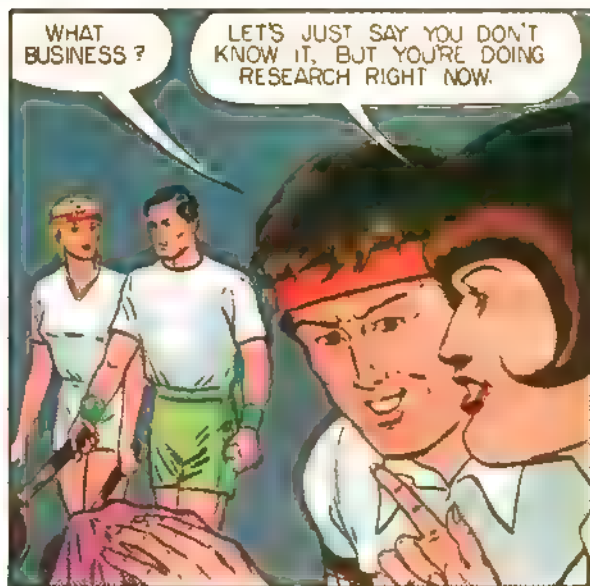


YEAH — CAME FOR THE PEACE AND QUIET — THEN GOT BORED .. AND FOUND OUT THIS PLACE IS NO "SINGLES" HAVEN.

WELL, I'M SINGLE...







Here they come...
The

DNAGENTS

BY MARK EVANIER AND WILL MEUGNIOT

GENETICALLY ENGINEERED TO BE
UNQUESTIONING OPERATIVES
FOR A MULTI-NATIONAL
CORPORATION --

THEIR SCIENTIST CREATORS
FORGOT ONE THING --

THE DNAGENTS HAVE
MINDS OF THEIR OWN!!

FIRST BLOCKBUSTER ISSUE
ON SALE IN MARCH AS A
QUALITY BAXTER BOOK!

Frank Miller's "Famous Detective Pin-Up" No. 1

Mickey Spillane's

MIKE HAMMER

Star of movies, a tv series, radio show, newspaper strip, and of course, 11 novels, Mike Hammer is the most popular private eye of all time. He's a tough, no nonsense hard-boiled dick who answers murderers, not with a subpoena, but with his .45 automatic. Aided by his beautiful secretary and fellow licensed detective Velda, Hammer's ruggedly handsome looks are modelled, some say, on those of his creator, Mickey Spillane.

He was originally conceived as a comic book hero named Mike Danger. When that project was shelved, he leaped to fame in the 1953 novel, *I, the Jury*. He's taken the best seller lists by storm ever since, propelled by his violent hand-hewn moral code and the one-two punch of Mickey Spillane's powerful prose.



Have you ever dreamed of finding a never before published **Will Eisner** comic book from 1948?

Well, dream no more, Eisner fans — *a complete 32 page unpublished comic book has been found in Will Eisner's vault!!*



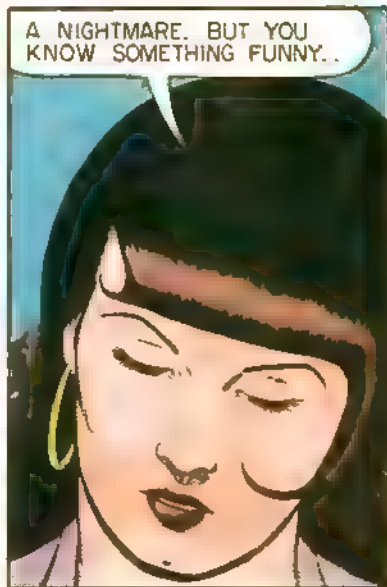
A FULL COLOR \$1.50 BAXTER BOOK

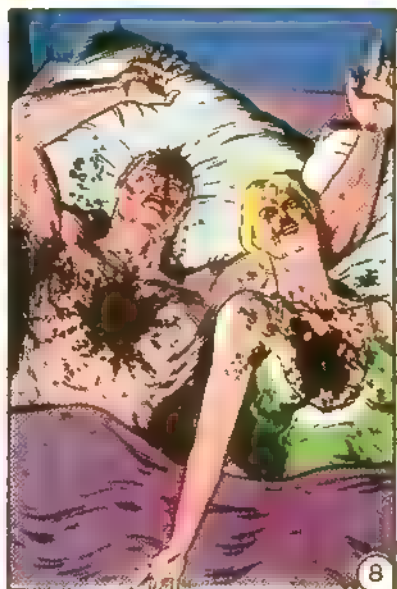
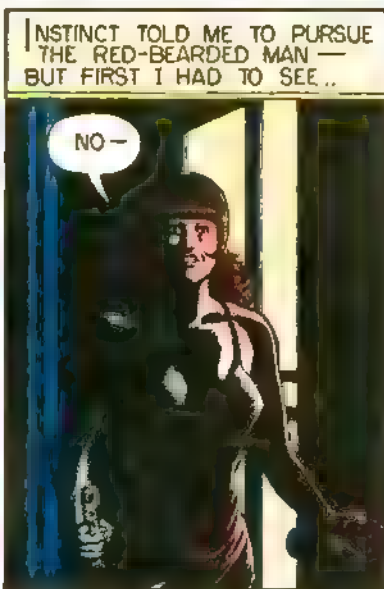
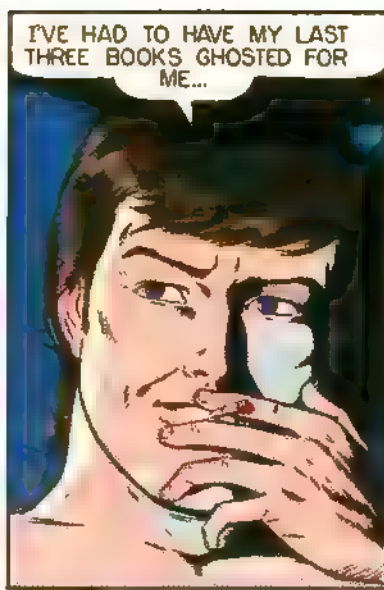
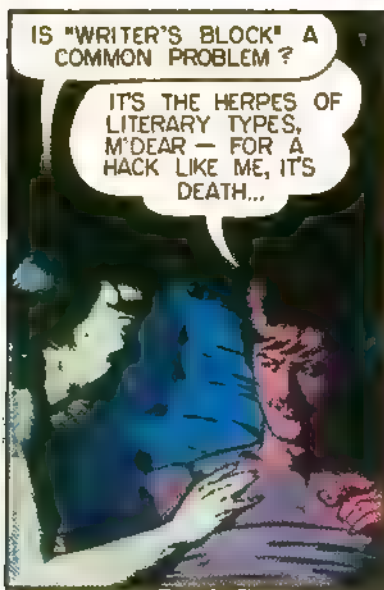
3 Complete Stories • 3 Fully Inked Alternate Covers • 1 Unused Splash
Introduction by Cat Yronwode • And get this —
the cover, pencilled in 1948, is being inked today by Will Eisner!

ON SALE IN MARCH



DON'T DARE MISS IT!





MT

"DEATH DO US PART"

TREE

by Max Collins and Terry Beatty

Chapter Three

PINE BEACH RESORT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE RESTFUL - IT MIGHT HELP ME TO ESCAPE THE MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND'S MURDER, ON OUR HONEYMOON NIGHT, MONTHS AGO -

ONE LONELY NIGHTMARE

NO!

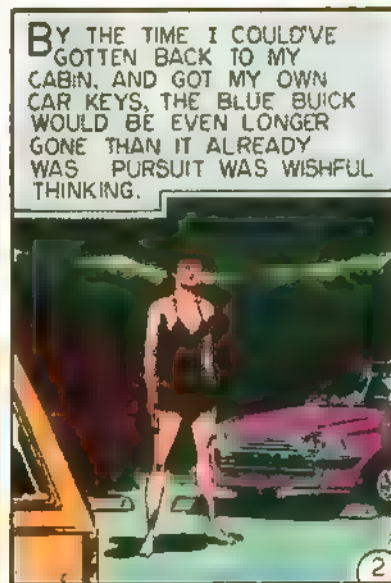
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Collins
and
Beatty

IT WAS AS IF THAT NIGHTMARE I'D BEEN HAVING HAD COME SUDDENLY TRUE -

NOT LITERALLY, MS. TREE.

NO, BUT IT PREFIGURED THE REALITY - IN MY RECURRING DREAM I'D SEEN A YOUNG COUPLE ON A BEACH KILLED; HERE, THEY'D DIED IN BED, IN THEIR HONEYMOON CABIN...

BASTARD!



I WENT BACK PATRICK SEEMED EMBARRASSED —

NICE BEHAVIOR, FOR THE AUTHOR OF MACHO PAPER-BACKS — PUING AT THE SIGHT OF BLOOD..

IT'S JUST I'VE WRITTEN ABOUT DEATH, BUT ONLY AS A SILLY PULP FANTASY. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I..

EVER REALLY HAD TO FACE IT?

YEAH.

WELL, IT DOESN'T GET EASIER THE SECOND TIME. COME ON — LET'S GET THE MANAGER OR SOMEBODY..

SHOTGUN FIRE SHATTERING THE SILENCE OF THE SUMMER NIGHT HAD ATTRACTED NO ONE'S ATTENTION BUT OURS — THE HONEY-MOON CABIN WAS ONE OF THREE NEAR THE BEACH FAR ENOUGH AWAY FROM THE MAIN LODGE TO ASSURE PRIVACY

THIS IS TERRIBLE!

RIGHT.

BOTH PATRICK AND I SPENT HOURS WITH THE POLICE. CAPTAIN SAM MEYERS, OF THE STATE BUREAU OF CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION, WAS IN CHARGE —

LOOKS LIKE THE KILLER HAD THE THIRD OF THESE ISOLATED CABINS

WE WERE IN MY CABIN AT THE MOMENT —

WE'RE GOING OVER HIS CABIN NOW, BUT WE WON'T FIND ANYTHING — THE GUY'S OBVIOUSLY A PRO.

MIND IF I HAVE A LOOK?

NOT AT ALL, MS. TREE — WE'RE LUCKY TO HAVE A TRAINED OBSERVER LIKE YOU ON THE SCENE.

FOR ALL THE GOOD IT DID THOSE KIDS.

IN THE WASTE BASKET IN THE BATHROOM, LODGED BETWEEN THE PAPER LINER AND THE BASKET ITSELF, I FOUND SOMETHING —

SMELLS LIKE
ETHER...

SPIRIT GUM —
IT'S HOW
ACTORS KEEP
FAKE FACIAL
HAIR ON.

"THAT MAKES THE SKETCH
OUR ARTIST'S WORKING UP
DAMN NEAR WORTHLESS..."



YOUR ARTIST SHOULD BE
ABLE TO DO A CLEAN-SHAVEN
VERSION THAT'LL BE OF
SOME USE...



WE'VE TAKEN THE PICTURES,
CAPTAIN — AND THE MEDICAL
EXAMINER'S DONE. SHOULD WE...?

YEAH. LET'S
GET 'EM
LOADED UP.



NOT MY
IDEA OF A
HONEYMOON

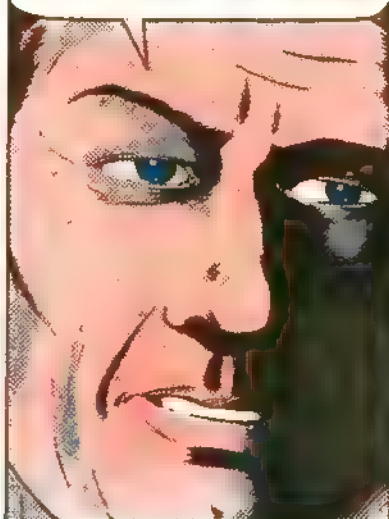
WHO WERE THEY, MEYER?
WHY WOULD ANYBODY
KILL A YOUNG COUPLE
LIKE THAT?



I TRUST THIS IS PURE
CURIOSITY, ON YOUR PART —
I WASN'T KIDDING WHEN I
SAID I WAS GLAD YOU WERE
ON THE SCENE. AN
INVESTIGATOR MAKES A HELL
OF A GOOD WITNESS.



BUT I KNOW ABOUT YOU,
LADY. I READ THE PAPERS.



AND YOU CAN HANDLE YOUR
OWN INVESTIGATION, THANKS —
RIGHT?

RIGHT. ANYWAY,
THE GIRL'S FAMILY
NAME WAS
MUERTA.



MUERTA?
YOU MEAN
TO SAY...

HER UNCLE IS DOMINIC
MUERTA. THE MOB GUY.
YES. NOW, LEAVE IT ALONE,
MS. TREE.

DOMINIC MUERTA — THE
MOB BOSS WHO, INDIRECTLY
AT LEAST, PLAYED A ROLE
IN MY HUSBAND MIKE TREE'S
DEATH...

LOOK — MUERTA'S BROTHER
APPARENTLY ISN'T "CONNECTED"
...HE'S IN THE ART GALLERY
BUSINESS — SEEMS TO BE
STRAIGHT.

BUT THAT WAS A PRO KILL
TONIGHT — AND A VICIOUS
ONE, AT THAT. IT'S GOT MOB
WRITTEN ALL OVER IT —
IN BLOOD.

MAYBE SO. BUT THE GROOM
WAS JUST SOME KID FROM
FLORIDA SHE MET AT COLLEGE
IN THE CITY. NAMED ASKAM.
AND THAT'S ALL WE KNOW
SO FAR...

I WALKED TO THE BEACH — THE BEACH
THAT SO RESEMBLED THE BEACH IN MY
DREAM — A RECURRING DREAM IN WHICH THE
MAN DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MIKE'S
MURDER KILLED A YOUNG COUPLE —

THOUGHT I'D FIND
YOU HERE.
DISAPPOINTED IN
ME?

PATRICK! OF COURSE!
NOT... YOU'RE
FINISHED WITH THE
POLICE?

YES, BUT WE'LL BOTH BE HEARING FROM THEM AGAIN. MICHAEL, I'M SO EMBARRASSED — I FELL APART. HOW CAN YOU BE SO STRONG?

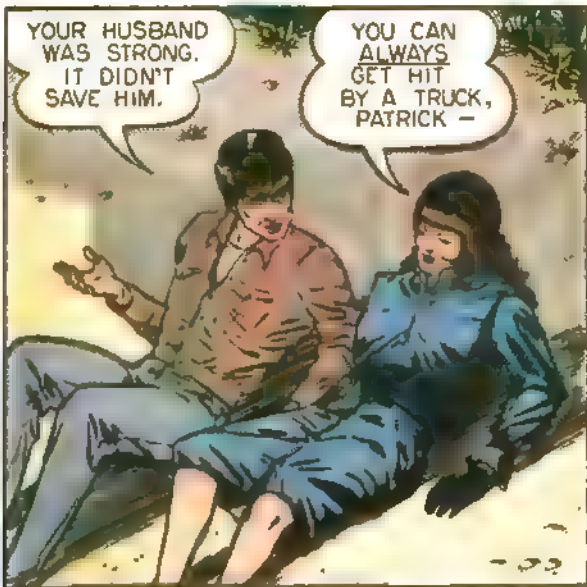


BECAUSE IF YOU'RE WEAK, YOU'RE DEAD.. IN MY BUSINESS, ANYWAY.



YOUR HUSBAND WAS STRONG. IT DIDN'T SAVE HIM.

YOU CAN ALWAYS GET HIT BY A TRUCK, PATRICK —

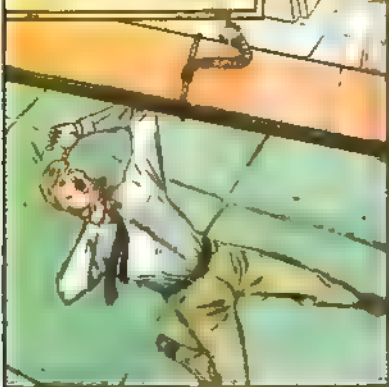


OR A FALLING BEAM.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?



"THAT'S A DASHIELL HAMMETT REFERENCE. I'M A MYSTERY WRITER, REMEMBER? HAMMETT SAW THE UNIVERSE AS A PLACE WHERE BEAMS WERE CONSTANTLY FALLING — BUT IT HELPS IF YOU KNOW THEY'RE FALLING."



I'D AGREE WITH THAT

FORGIVE ME FOR NOT BEING STRONGER?



BEING CALLOUS ABOUT DEATH AND VIOLENCE ISN'T "STRENGTH," PATRICK — YOUR REACTION TONIGHT WAS ONLY HUMAN...





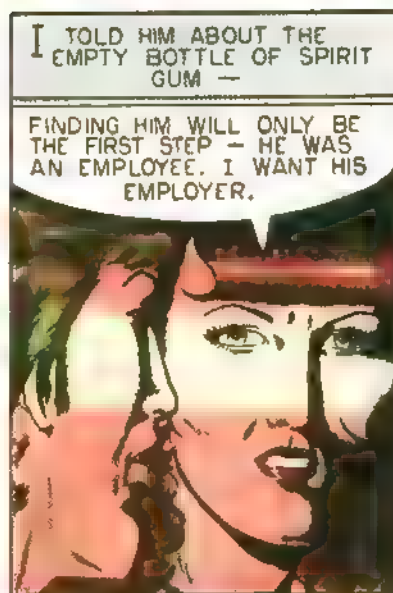
THOSE POOR
KIDS. I'D
LIKE TO...

DO SOMETHING
ABOUT IT?
SO WOULD I.
SO AM I.



DON'T TELL ME
YOU'RE GOING TO
TRACK DOWN THAT
RED-HEADED
KILLER —

JUST LIKE IN THE
MYSTERY BOOKS,
PATRICK — ONLY
I DOUBT HE WAS
A REAL REDHEAD.

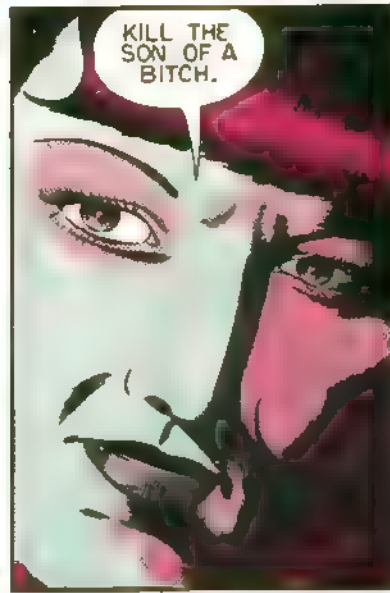


I TOLD HIM ABOUT THE
EMPTY BOTTLE OF SPIRIT
GUM —

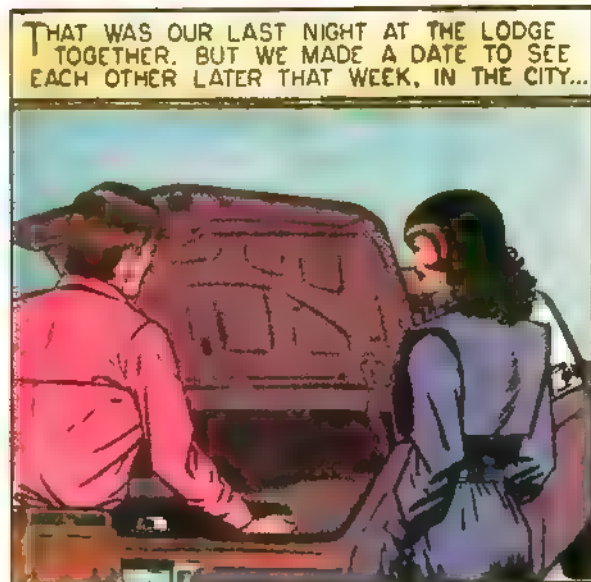
FINDING HIM WILL ONLY BE
THE FIRST STEP — HE WAS
AN EMPLOYEE. I WANT HIS
EMPLOYER.



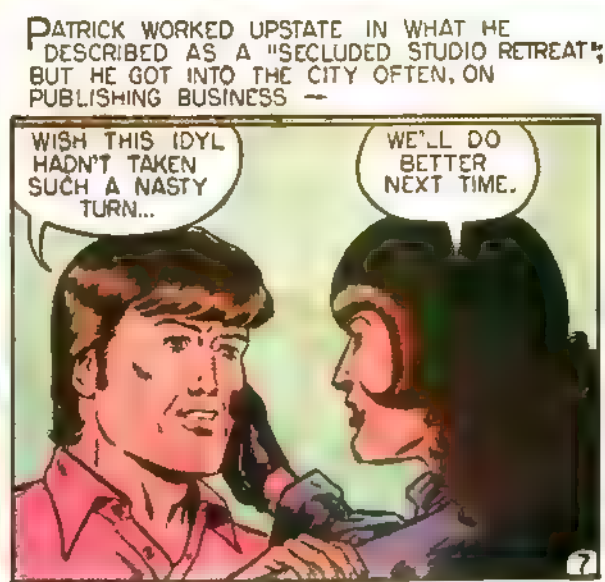
AND WHAT
WILL YOU
DO ABOUT
IT?



KILL THE
SON OF A
BITCH.



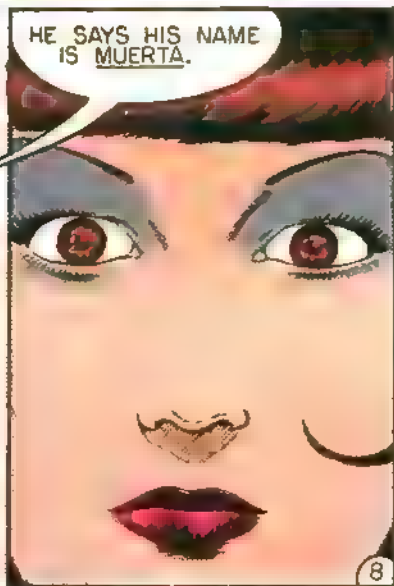
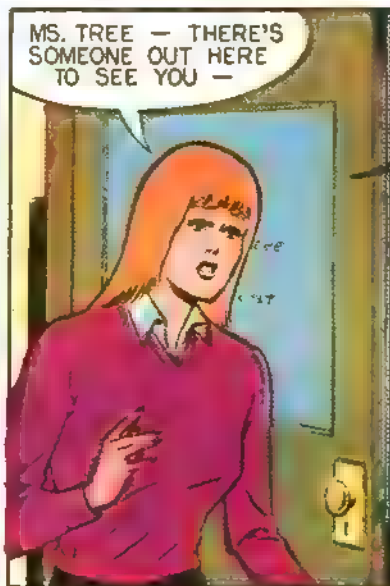
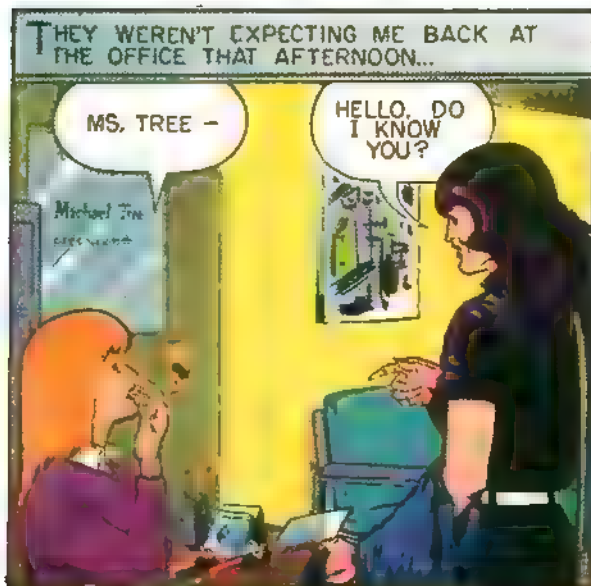
THAT WAS OUR LAST NIGHT AT THE LODGE
TOGETHER. BUT WE MADE A DATE TO SEE
EACH OTHER LATER THAT WEEK, IN THE CITY...



PATRICK WORKED UPSTATE IN WHAT HE
DESCRIBED AS A "SECLUDED STUDIO RETREAT";
BUT HE GOT INTO THE CITY OFTEN, ON
PUBLISHING BUSINESS —

WISH THIS IDYL
HADN'T TAKEN
SUCH A NASTY
TURN...

WE'LL DO
BETTER
NEXT TIME.

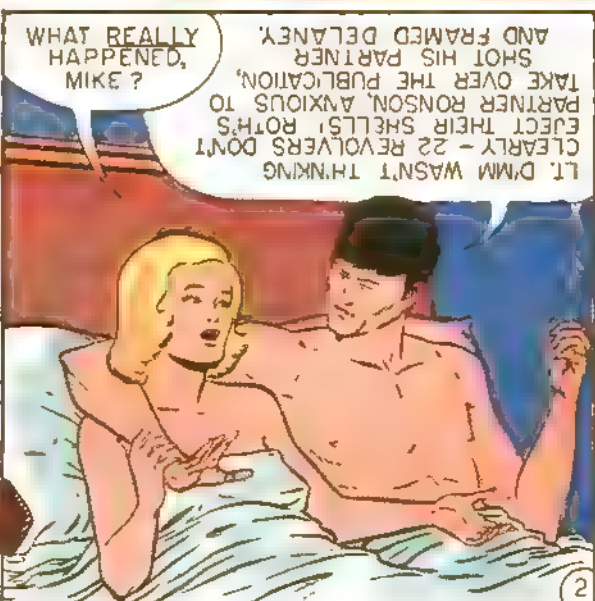
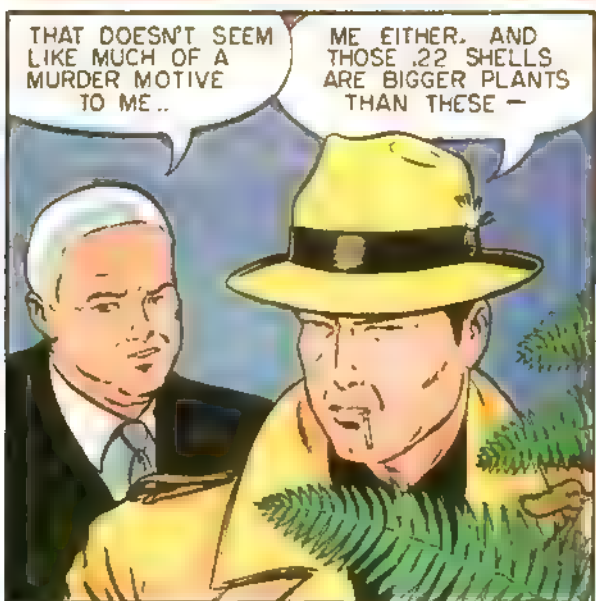
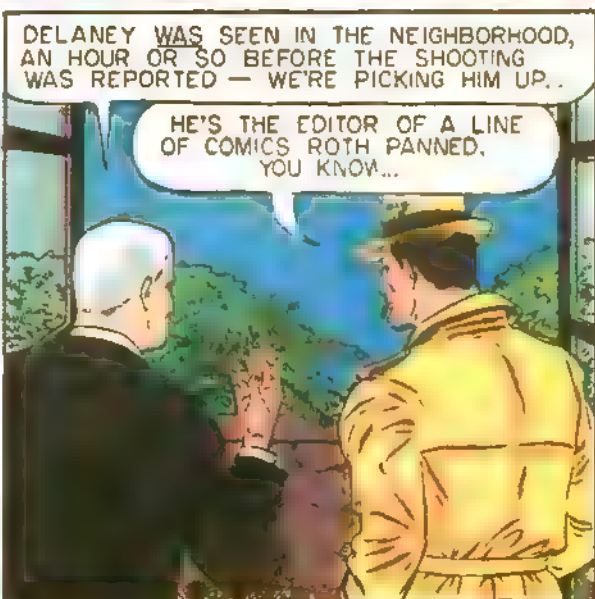
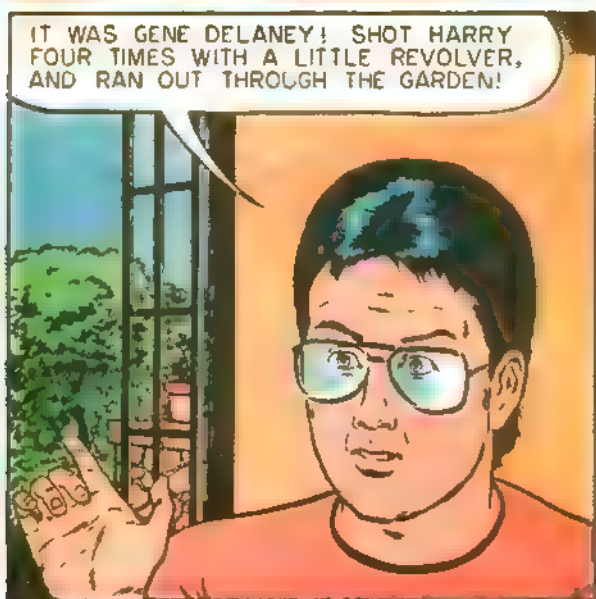
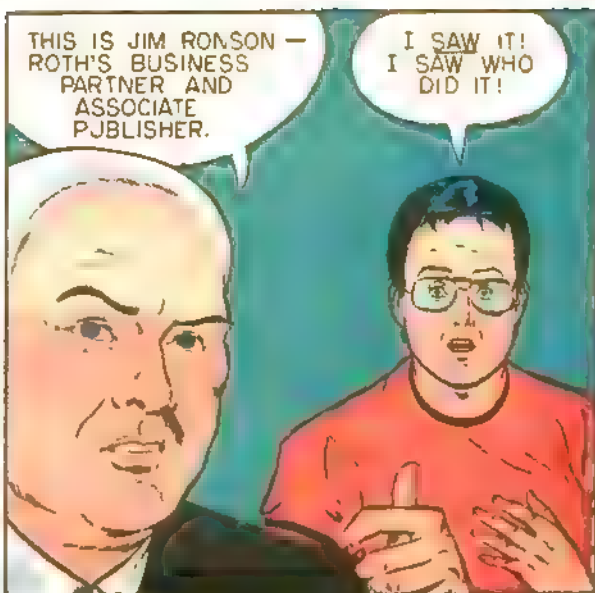
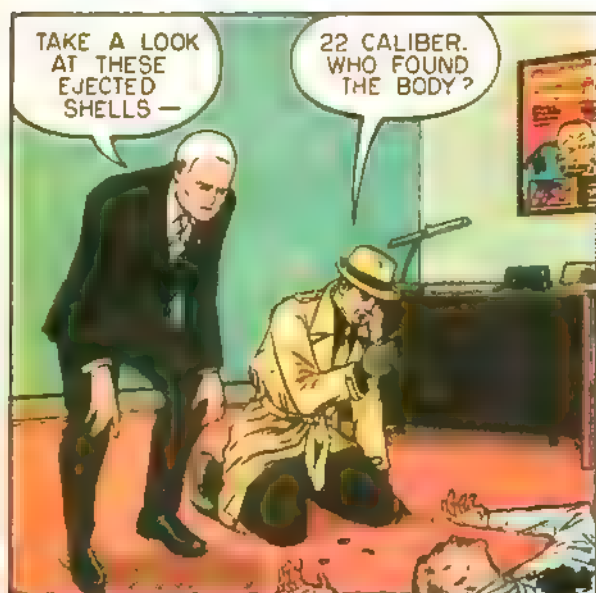


NO LAUGHING MURDER



"NOT AT ALL — JUST LAST WEEK THE PUBLISHER OF A COMICS FANZINE WAS SHOT AND KILLED —"







Please send your letters to:
SWAK
 Eclipse Comics
 105 Austin Avenue
 Columbia, MO 65201

SWAK is a page (or pages, in some instances - like this one) that will be devoted to letters and editorial comment. Letters are encouraged, whether pro or con, and for openers I'd suggest that anyone who doesn't know what SWAK stands for might write and ask. I might even answer. (Incidentally, SWAK will have no truck with the editorial "we.")

Anyway, welcome to *Ms. Tree's Thrilling Detective Adventures*, the comic book that sounds like a law firm. About that title: it had originally been announced that this book would be called *Ms. Tree*; but Dean and Jan Mullaney, after a certain amount of market research, decided it would be advantageous to use the words "thrilling," "detective" and "adventure" in a title, and shrewdly came up with the title *Thrilling Detective Adventures*. The writer (me) and the artist (Terry Beatty), having been promised a book called *Ms. Tree*, reacted like true professionals and had twin tantrums. Dean and Jan (notice the lengths I go to not to refer to the Mullaney as Jan and Dean) realized immediately that they were dealing with nutcases, and offered to compromise. And if ever a title sounded like a compromise, *Ms. Tree's Thrilling Detective Adventures* is it. Oh, well—the logo's nice (thanks to Denis McFarling).

And we will not be referring to the book as *MTDA*, which sounds like something Jerry Lewis might do a telethon for. We (that's not the editorial "we", now, that's me and Terry and Dean and Jan) will be referring to the book as *Ms. Tree*, and encourage you to do the same.

One of the reasons Dean and Jan wanted to give the book a more anthology-style title was that the "Ms. Tree" feature would only be taking up sixteen pages (two eight-page chapters) of a book that would also contain a two-page "Mike Mist Minure Mistery" (by Collins & Beatty) and a back-up feature called "The Scythe," a costumed detective to be written by Eclipse's own Dean Mullaney, and drawn by veteran cartoonist Dan Adkins.

You will notice, however, that neither Dan Adkins nor a "Scythe" story appears in this issue, despite an advertisement in *The Buyer's Guide for Comics Fandom* that showed the cover of this issue with an Adkins "Scythe" drawing in the box to *Ms. Tree's* left. It seems, unbeknownst to Adkins when he agreed to take on "The Scythe," his DC contract at the moment precludes him doing work for independents like Eclipse; and, though the story was nearly completely pencilled, Adkins had to withdraw from the feature—and this issue.

Fortunately, Terry and I were well along the way to having the second issue's worth of "Ms. Tree" material completed (because of the addition of Frank Miller's "Famous Detective Pin-ups" to the line-up, the book was delayed 'till December, putting us ahead of schedule). So the space has been filled with an extra eight-page "Ms. Tree" chapter (and "The Scythe" will debut next time).

Which is fine with Beatty and Collins, because it will give those of you who have not met *Ms. Tree* 'till now, but may have heard about her (good or ill), a better chance to get acquainted. You will be reading three chapters of a seven-chapter mystery novel, in comics form, titled "Death Do Us Part."

I am not going to recap here *Ms. Tree's* "origin" story ("I, For An Eye," serialized in the first six issues of *Eclipse Magazine*) because that is pretty much handled within the

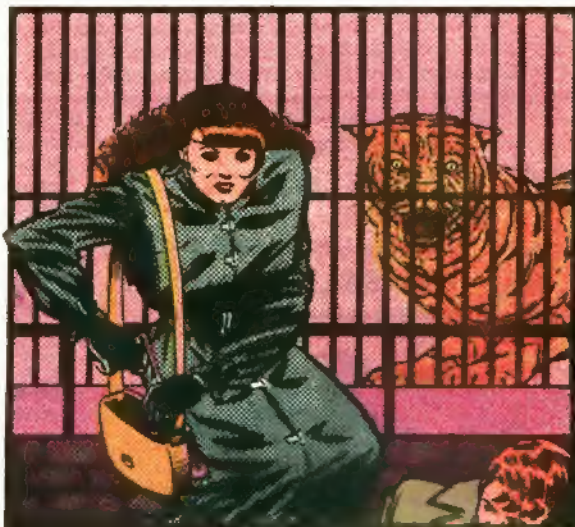
first chapter of "Death Do Us Part." I will, however, say something about how the "Ms. Tree" feature came to be, though since this has been discussed at length in several recent interviews (*Comics Feature*, *The Comics Journal*, *Comics Scene*); I'll try to make it brief (and will lapse temporarily into the third person).

Terry Beatty (24) and Max Collins (34) are both lifelong residents of Muscatine, Iowa, a Mississippi rivertown small enough to insure that two comic book fans—even if separated by ten years—were bound to run into each other; they were further intertwined by fate due to Beatty's father having been Collins' junior high English teacher. Around 1974 Beatty took a film class Collins was teaching at the local community college, and each was immediately impressed by how smart the other was (meaning, they shared similar opinions): Around 1976, Beatty left his job as a radio disc jockey to become sound man (as opposed to a sound man) for a rock band Collins was appearing with. In 1977 Collins landed the job as writer of the *Dick Tracy* comic strip and he and Beatty began discussing the possibility of collaborating on something. Samples for a revival of an *Orphan Annie* comic strip were submitted to the Chicago Tribune Syndicate, who commissioned Beatty and Collins to do further samples, followed by the first two weeks of the strip. But the project fell through, and eventually Leonard Starr made *Annie* a big success, depressing Beatty and Collins no end.

Did I say this was the brief version?

Anyway, returning to third person: Beatty and Collins sprang back from defeat by launching a project that was destined to propel them to the top of the self-syndicated weekly comic strip world. This didn't amount to much, however, since their feature, *The Comics Page*, (a tabloid page of six different comics drawn by Beatty, written by Collins) was the only such page in existence and at its peak ran in only 14 papers nationally. After a year, the duo packed its tents and slipped quietly into the night.

Then, at the 1980 Chicago Con, Beatty and Collins ran into Dean Mullaney, who had just published a book called *Detective, Inc.* Mullaney had seen the "Mike Mist" feature



which was running solo in the *Chicago Reader*. Mullaney, it turned out, was a fan of Collins' *Dick Tracy* work, and a big detective fan in general, and asked to collect the "Mike Mist" strips into a comic (see the inside back cover in this ish - I promise never to use the term "ish" again). This led in turn to him requesting Beatty and Collins to come up with a detective feature for the about-to-be-launched magazine *Eclipse*, and the rest is comics history—or maybe a footnote in comics history.

The Ms. Tree character springs from a specific source: the Mike Hammer novels by Mickey Spillane. A traditional convention of the private eye story—what the hell, a cliché of the private eye story—is that the private eye has a faithful secretary who loves him, and whom he loves, but while marriage is often discussed, it never seems to happen. Perhaps the most famous example of this is Mike Hammer's relationship with his secretary Velda. But where Spillane departs from convention or cliché is that Velda is a licensed private eye, too, a pistol-packing mama who stands near six foot herself and is damn near as tough as Hammer. She is, in fact, essentially the female Mike Hammer. So it occurred to me... what if Hammer ever really did marry Velda, and what if Hammer were then murdered on their wedding night? Why, Velda would quite naturally step into her late husband's shoes—taking over the detective business, and solving his murder.

And that, more or less, is the premise of "Ms. Tree." (As a tip of the hat to the Mick, the late Mike Tree is patterned after the comic strip interpretation of Hammer by Ed Robbins, from the early '50's *Mike Hammer* strip; also, Ms. Tree's maiden name—Michael Friday—is the name of a female character in *Kiss Me Deadly*. Also, in this web of homages, it's possible that the name of Ms. Tree's poppa, who was a cop, is Joe.)

This is not to say that Ms. Tree is Velda; or that her husband Mike Tree is Mike Hammer. They are not. For one thing, the Hammer stories grow out of the post-World War II era; "Ms. Tree" is post-Vietnam. "Ms. Tree" is also a part of the Woman's Liberation period—though the character is not, as some critics have mistakenly labelled her, a "feminist"—at least not in any political, activist sense; Ms. Tree is a feminist only in the way any modern, intelligent working woman is likely to be.

"Ms. Tree" has already been the subject of some controversy; we've had some praise, and some pans. Fair enough. But let me lay it out: the idea, here, is to do a straight, tough mystery story in a rather adult fashion. In other words, the mystery stories I tell in "Ms. Tree" are not consciously conceived in any different manner than a mystery story I would tell in one of my novels. No "writing down." The only mild concession I've made is the Dickensian names are broader than I would use in a novel (but not as broad as I'd use in *Dick Tracy*).

And, as I've said elsewhere, it was our idea to do "Ms. Tree" as an experiment in coherence. We have consciously avoided fancy storytelling pyrotechnics for the time-

If you've fallen in love with Ms. Tree (and who hasn't?!), you can keep her close to your heart by wearing the official Ms. Tree tee-shirt. It's a high quality, screen printed 100% cotton shirt, and is only \$8.95 from Graphitti Designs, 515 W. Valencia, Dr., Unit E, Fullerton, CA 92632.



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S M L XL

honored conventions of comic books—if it was good enough for Johnny Craig, it's good enough for us. Straight, no frills storytelling. A good, entertaining read. That's what we hope to deliver.

Let me answer a few of the questions that have been raised in letters to *Eclipse* magazine, regarding the first "Ms. Tree" novel. Several readers have complained about slow pacing. I would like to ask readers if they still feel the pacing of "Ms. Tree" is slow after seeing three chapters in one issue, rather than one chapter per issue every two (or three or four) months. The delays between issues of *Eclipse* made our story seem to drag on forever... and, to answer another letter of comment, made it difficult for readers to remember who all the suspects were and pull all the clues together for the denouement. Also, we are not doing a super-hero comic; we intend to deal with character here, as well as plot, and there will not be a fight scene every chapter. If constant fight scenes make for fast-pacing, then fast pacing is something you should not expect to see in "Ms. Tree."

So to the dealers and distributors who ordered *Ms. Tree* in quantity, despite her not being dressed in a leotard and cape, we say: "Thank you."

And to you readers out there, new and old alike, we thank you as well, for giving us your support, or anyway giving us a try; and encourage you to write us letters, to keep me from ever having to write this much editorial comment again. Send your comments to *Eclipse* and they'll forward all mail to Terry and me.

—Max Allan Collins

NEXT ISSUE: Ms. Tree jumps head first into the investigation. Plus: the origin of the Scythe. And, Miller & Marlowe!

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by JIM STARLIN

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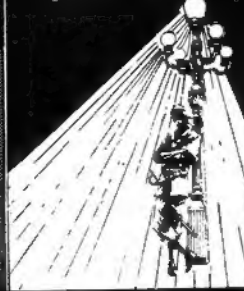


GERB COLAN & PALMER

MIKE MIST
MINUTE MYSTERIES



DRAGONFLAME



THE VARIABLE SYNDROME

Don McGregor



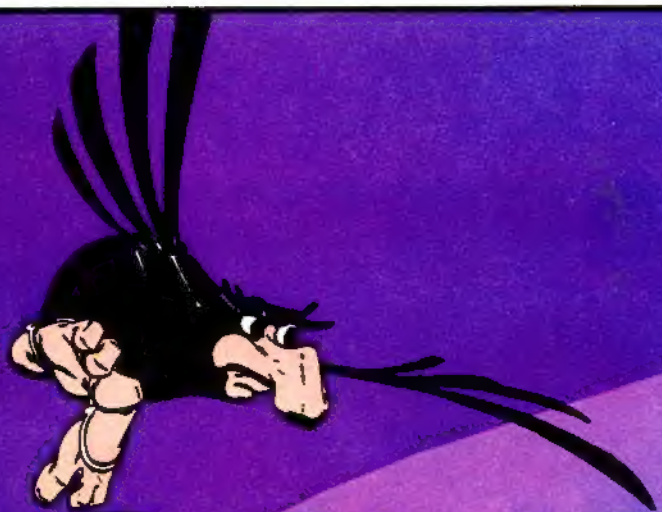
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